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2 Session, 25 Legislature

EMBRACING ALBERTA'S FUTURE

2000-2001 Activity Report

ALBERTA
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

102-05671/

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Alberta's growth rate will outpace all other Canadian provinces this year, thanks to a combination of tax cuts, high energy prices, and numerous construction projects.

– CONFERENCE BOARD OF CANADA, 2001

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Douglas H. Mitchell, Q.C.
Chair

MOMENTUM IS EVERYTHING

Alberta is definitely on the move. Steadily and consistently, momentum has been building. Not only are we outperforming other provincial economies across the country, we are poised to take our place as an important force in the North American marketplace.

A number of critical factors are in place as Alberta enters the 21st Century. Our economy is performing very well, and it is more diversified than in the past. The government has maintained its positive track record of balancing budgets, reducing the debt and dropping taxes for individuals and for business. More Albertans are working than ever before and their incomes are rising.

Momentum is definitely on our side.

The key to our continued success is to keep the momentum building and not lose sight of the challenges ahead. We have seen the ups and downs of Alberta's economy in the past. We can, and we must, learn from that experience and we must take action now to position Alberta for strong and steady growth.

The Alberta Economic Development Authority feels the underpinnings of Alberta's strong economy – its dynamic business community and responsible and business-minded government – are solid. Now we must look ahead. Consider the choices we have to make. Balance our economic vision with the kind of society we want to build for future generations of Albertans. Keep pace not only with other provinces but with leading economies around the world. And take action to keep Alberta's momentum building.

Our goal should be to establish and maintain Alberta in a premier position in the world. To do this, we must build on our current momentum and raise the bar higher. Maintaining the status quo is simply not good enough. Business and government must be more productive, competitive, innovative and creative.

Looking ahead, there are some bright signs on the horizon. The different sectors of Alberta's economy are in a position to compete and succeed, not just here in Canada but around the world. The challenge is to capitalize on those strengths, to use the creativity and drive of Albertans and transform that into made-in-Alberta solutions that meet our goals.

This activity report for the Alberta Economic Development Authority outlines the initiatives that are being taken to develop some of those made-in-Alberta solutions.

We urge the business community, the provincial government, and all Albertans to work together to keep the momentum going and to build an outstanding future for our province.

When Albertans start a job, they see it through. We've started to build strong momentum for Alberta. We've started to build an outstanding future for our province. Now, it's time to tackle challenges head on, step up Alberta's position in the global marketplace, and take Alberta's economy to the next level. It's time to see it through.

– DOUG MITCHELL

PARTNERSHIPS WORK

We have all heard about teams, about partnerships, about the importance of working together. In the case of the Alberta Economic Development Authority, these concepts are not just words or talk. They are actions and results.

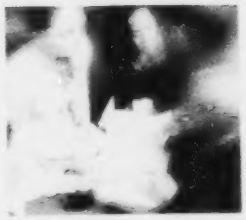
Since 1994, AEDA has built a strong link between the business community and the Alberta government. AEDA has provided a voice for large and small business, promoted the Alberta Advantage, provided solid advice to government, and helped generate wealth and employment for Albertans.

AEDA COMMITTEES:

1) Taxation and Financing Committee
2) Transportation and Infrastructure Committee
3) Export and Trade Committee
4) Self-Reliant Communities Committee
5) Jobs for the Future Committee
6) Energy and Energy Products Committee
7) Agriculture and Agriculture Products Committee
8) Technology and Technology Products Committee
9) Forestry and Forestry Products Committee
10) Tourism Committee

BUILD THE RIGHT TEAM

This unique partnership between the public and private sectors enhances Alberta's ability to grow and prosper in all areas of the economy and enhances the province's ability to create new opportunities at home and abroad.



The result of strengthening the relationship between government and business – putting them together at the same table to sort out ideas and opportunities – is better understanding and closer ties. More importantly, however, the result of strengthening that relationship is combined energy and ideas, deliberate action, and a clear focus on the marketplace and what needs to be done to strengthen Alberta's economy.

Achieving the vision is not ***a job for government alone****.*
Business and industry*, schools, universities, colleges*
and technical institutes, ***municipalities and health*** *authorities,*
researchers, technicians and people ***working in the trades****...*
all Albertans need to work together to make the visions ***a reality****.*

– GET READY ALBERTA

GET READY ALBERTA

Setting the right direction is critical. To paraphrase a line from Yogi Berra, "If you don't know where you're going, you might not get there."

Get Ready Alberta, Alberta's new economic strategy, sets a clear direction for the future. It is designed to maintain Alberta's position as a Canadian economic leader and to seize the opportunities of the new global economy.

Get Ready Alberta sets new directions in four key areas:

- unleashing innovation;
- leading in learning;
- competing in a global marketplace; and,
- making Alberta the best place to live, work and visit.

SET THE RIGHT DIRECTION

Unleashing innovation

Goal: Establishing Alberta as a world leader in innovation, research, development, and commercialization of new ideas.

Accomplishments:

- $500-million endowment for the Alberta Heritage Foundation of Science and Engineering Research;
- announcement of a province-wide Internet network called Supernet that will give 420 Alberta communities access to affordable high-speed Internet service by 2004; and,
- increased investment in research and development to an estimated $920 million, up $50 million from 1999.

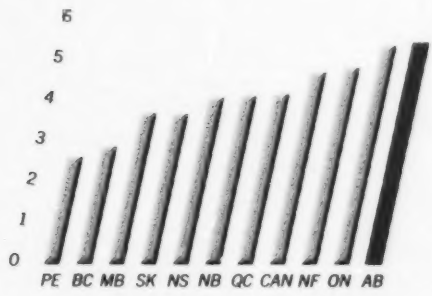
Leading in learning

Goal: Ensuring that all Albertans have the opportunities they need to learn, adapt and develop new knowledge and skills.

Accomplishments:

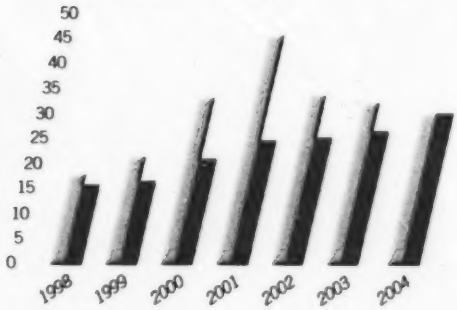
- opening 2,263 new post-secondary spaces in information and communication technology programs;
- $1-billion investment in the New Century Schools Plan; and,
- $2-million infrastructure investment to upgrade post-secondary institutions.

REAL ECONOMIC GROWTH
(in percentage – 1996-2000)



**2000 estimated*
Source: *Statistics Canada, Alberta Finance and the Conference Board of Canada*

MAJOR EXPORTS STRONG
(in billions of dollars)
Alberta Nominal Exports



Source: *Statistics Canada and Alberta Finance*

Competing in a global marketplace

Goal: Ensuring that Alberta is recognized internationally as a good place to invest and do business, and that Alberta businesses can compete and succeed worldwide.

Accomplishments:

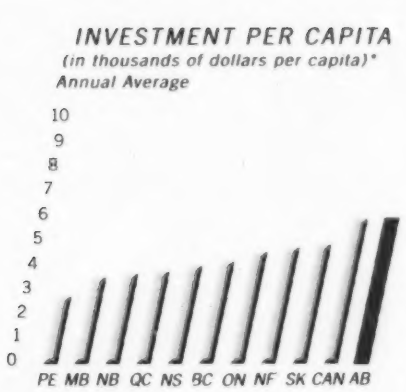
- saving Alberta businesses $1 billion by cutting corporate income taxes in half by 2004;
- committing $5.6 billion to reduce Alberta's accumulated debt;
- expanding employment by 34,900 new jobs, for a total of 1.6 million jobs; and,
- implementing a 10-per cent single-rate personal income tax system on January 1, 2001.

Making Alberta the best place to live, work and visit

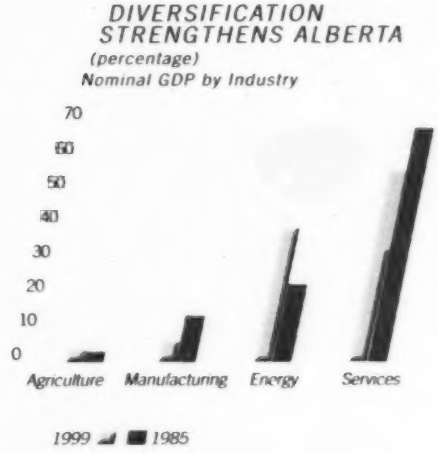
Goal: Ensuring that Albertans enjoy an unmatched quality of life.

Accomplishments:

- investing $500 million in the health care system in 2000-2001;
- expanding our provincial network of parks and protected areas by 5,800 square kilometres; and,
- increasing tourism revenues to an estimated $4.4 billion, up $200 million from 1999.



*2000 preliminary estimate
Source: Statistics Canada



Source: Alberta Finance

To succeed, Alberta businesses and industries need to expand their horizons to compete, not only across Alberta and Canada, but around the world. As a province, Alberta has to compete aggressively in markets with other provinces, states and countries for investment and new business opportunities.

– GET READY ALBERTA

TAKE ACTION

Build momentum. Put the right team in place. Set the right direction. All of these are important. But it takes action to really make things happen and to see the right results.

In 2000-2001, the Alberta Economic Development Authority completed or initiated key strategies and activities that capitalize on important opportunities in critical sectors of our economy.

LONG-TERM FORESTRY STRATEGY

Alberta's forestry sector has great potential for growth. In order to identify what needs to be done to realize this potential, AEDA's Forestry and Forestry Products Committee consulted with a cross-section of industry and government stakeholders and addressed important challenges facing Alberta's forestry industry. The result was a clear new vision and direction.

A Strategic Vision and Direction for Alberta's Forest Sector sets out a series of long-term goals, directions and strategies that will guide growth in the forestry sector to 2010.

The goals are to:

- improve forest productivity;
- advance a world-class primary manufacturing sector;
- enhance a globally competitive secondary manufacturing sector;
- stimulate the emerging tertiary manufacturing sector;
- broaden community partnership and participation; and,
- use and support a vibrant forestry industry supply and service sector.

The strategy calls for annual reporting of results to track progress in achieving the strategic vision and following through on a new direction for the forest industry.

LONG-TERM TOURISM DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Tourism has traditionally been one of Alberta's leading industries. But in the past few years, other provinces have taken major strides while Alberta has faced serious challenges in maintaining and expanding its tourism industry.

To address these challenges, AEDA's Tourism Committee prepared a long-term tourism development strategy, *Preparing for Alberta's Tourism Future, December 2000.* The strategy is focused on meeting the provincial government's target of increasing tourism revenues to $6 billion.

The report identifies a number of issues that affect current and future opportunities for tourism development:

- the need for an overall, integrated tourism strategy that supports a long-term plan for tourism development;
- the need for targeted support to expand Alberta's supply of tourism products and destinations;
- the complexity of and need to co-ordinate land use issues;
- the need for access to and use of Crown lands with high tourism potential and recreation value;
- the importance of responding to limits on tourism developments in mountain national parks;
- the urgent need to expand tourism developments outside of mountain national parks; and,
- the need to improve infrastructure support for the tourism industry.

To respond to these issues, the report recommends several key strategies for action and a new way of doing business in the tourism sector.

ALBERTA AVIATION STRATEGY

How should Alberta's aviation sector position itself to maximize opportunities in the new economy?

That question was at the heart of a request to the Alberta Economic Development Authority.

In response, AEDA formed a task force and created an action plan focusing on four key elements: government policy framework, financial stability, business strategies, and action central. The Strategy prioritized issues, specified decision-makers, and mapped out schedules for 40 action items.

The result is an Alberta Aviation Strategy and action plan based on six principles:

- because the aviation sector is a service industry, it should be driven primarily by customer demand;
- a maximum number of competitively priced domestic and international air connections must be available to and from all regions of the country;
- air facilities must be integrated throughout each region, including international, regional and community airports;
- intermodal connectivity must be optimized, so that distribution and gathering of passengers and cargo is seamless for the customers;
- infrastructure development and logistical integration requires a collaborative investment plan supported by federal and provincial governments, as well as industry; and,
- a supply of skilled people must be maintained in aircraft maintenance, avionics, airport management and other careers in the aviation sector.

The Strategy calls for the establishment of the Aviation Strategy Action Group with a mandate to oversee the implementation, monitoring and updating of the Alberta Aviation Strategy and action plan.

CANADA TRANSPORTATION ACT REVIEW

In July of 2000, the federal government appointed a panel to conduct a statutory review of the Canada Transportation Act. The main objective of the review was to assess whether the act and related legislation provide Canadians with an efficient, effective, flexible and affordable transportation system and to suggest policy and legislative improvements where deficiencies are identified.

At the request of Alberta's minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, the Alberta Economic Development Authority developed and implemented a process designed to seek the views of Alberta stakeholders on changes to the Canada Transportation Act. The stakeholders were also asked to make recommendations on necessary changes to the act and to related federal legislation.

A series of workshops was held involving Alberta's shippers, travellers, carriers, and facility operators, labour and other stakeholders. The purpose was to seek their views on the effectiveness of the CTA, to provide input to the provincial government's position on the CTA Review and to review interim reports prepared by the federal review panel. The proceedings of these final consultations were provided to the Government of Alberta for consideration in preparing its final position.

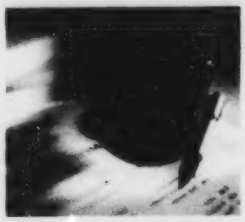
SMALL BUSINESS SERVICES REVIEW

For many years, the provincial government has provided a range of services to small businesses in the province. The Alberta Economic Development Authority believes that government has a significant role to play in providing assistance to small businesses and business start-ups. But it is important for that role to be clear.

AEDA reviewed the provincial government's role in providing services to small business and determined that the most appropriate role involves facilitation and acting as an accessible source of information.

Based on this conclusion, the Small Business Services Review Committee recommended the following action plans:

- the Alberta government should initiate discussions with municipal and federal government representatives, together with private sector service providers, to develop a comprehensive inventory of services and programs currently available. Overlap and duplication should be addressed and consensus reached on which agency will provide the service or assistance in the future;
- the Alberta government should act as a facilitator in developing a clearing-house for providing small business and new business start-ups with a one-stop location for information on services and programs being offered by all levels of government and the private sector. The service should be readily available in all regions of the province;
- the Alberta government should establish an interactive website designed to serve the needs of small business. By making the website interactive, immediate feedback will be available on an ongoing basis. This will allow for constant updating and improvement. In order to ensure the website's effectiveness, the government should commit to advertising the website extensively throughout the province; and,
- the Alberta government, through the use of its own facilities or in co-operation with other public- or private-service providers, should establish identifiable business service centres within all of the regions for the purpose of providing physical access to information, programs and assistance available to small business.



PERSONAL INFORMATION PROTECTION AND ELECTRONIC DOCUMENTS ACT

In June of 2000, the federal government passed legislation dealing with privacy protection in the field of electronic commerce. The provincial government and AEDA were concerned about the possible burden that could be placed on Alberta businesses by Bill C-6, especially on small- and medium-sized businesses.

At the request of Alberta Municipal Affairs, the Alberta Economic Development Authority surveyed Alberta stakeholders and held focus groups of small- and medium-sized businesses in Alberta to reach a conclusion on the impact of the *Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act* (PIPEDA) in Alberta.

Through this review, AEDA found that:

- stakeholders and small businesses are moderately supportive of this legislation;
- more effort needs to be put into publicizing the legislation;
- the large majority of respondents feel that provincial legislation is not wanted and that a harmonious national legislative framework is the ideal situation; and,
- local enforcement of the national legislation would be preferable to centralized, federal enforcement.

GLOBAL BUSINESS FORUM

The Alberta Economic Development Authority initiated the Global Business Forum to focus on building a stronger future together and working toward a more globally competitive Canada.

On September 21 and 22, 2000, AEDA, in co-operation with the Business Council on National Issues, hosted the first Global Business Forum in Banff, Alberta. Over 135 of Canada's senior business leaders and other representatives from the public, private and non-profit sectors attended.

Canada's top business leaders looked to the future and saw the obstacles that stand in the way of our becoming a leader in the global economy. Together, the CEOs said that Canada faces many challenges on the road to global leadership:

- our weak currency penalizes importers and discourages some exporters from making necessary improvements to their businesses;
- our high corporate and personal taxes give all other G7 economies a competitive advantage over Canada;
- our low research and development spending prevents us from realizing our potential as a modern knowledge-based economy;
- our businesses are responding too slowly to the opportunities of e-business; and,
- our business community is complacent about the future of trade liberalization and trading agreements, putting Canada's economy at risk.

While recognizing these obstacles, the participants also were presented with concrete actions to help Canada overcome the obstacles to success. Among the actions suggested were:

- business should focus on the benefits of trade as a democratizing force in society, and be more active and vocal in support of Canada's trade position;
- business should demonstrate support for education and should work toward improving our ability to attract and retain the best faculty and top students;
- businesses should increase R&D spending in their own organizations;
- businesses should take more risks, support innovation, and invest in Canadian start-ups;
- business should keep up the pressure on governments to accelerate the pace of tax relief until Canada is competitive with the G7;
- business should keep up the pressure for a more competitive regulatory environment that acknowledges the role of speed in managing change; and,
- business should take advantage of Canada's excellent high-tech infrastructure and high degree of computer literacy to move more quickly into e-business.

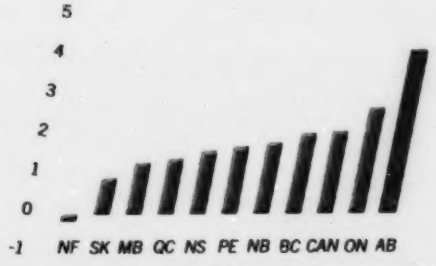
The Global Business Forum was an important first-step in identifying how the corporate and government sectors can adapt and partner in developing a climate where opportunity and the ability to compete globally are second to none.

ONGOING ACTIVITIES

During the past year, AEDA was involved in a number of ongoing activities, including:

- continuing to identify the barriers and challenges Alberta faces in preparing people for jobs in the new economy and to develop strategies and policies for addressing those challenges;
- continuing its support and encouragement of regional economic development initiatives and strategies. Six of these alliances have already been formed and others are emerging across the province; and,
- continuing to review impediments to agricultural exports caused by supply management and marketing boards and developing recommendations on irrigation infrastructure.

BUSINESS GROWTH
(in percentage - 1996-2000)



**Businesses include all incorporated and unincorporated firms, except self-employed and single person firms.*
Source: *Statistics Canada*

Alberta is in a uniquely fortunate position. Thanks to visions, hard work and sacrifice, Albertans now have the chance to appreciate the fruit of those efforts. Alberta has led the way on so many issues because the people of this province have been willing to share opinions, to get involved and to take responsibility. That is why all Albertans need to be a part of this process. It is about making history and ensuring Alberta once again leads the way.

– PREMIER RALPH KLEIN

Alberta has strong momentum on its side. Important actions are underway and we are seeing positive results.

This, however, is no time to relax. Alberta needs to build on the momentum it has achieved, tackle challenges head on, and take action to maintain and strengthen its economy.

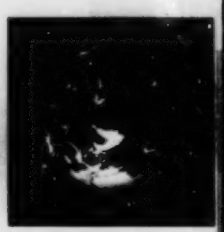
Put simply, we need to embrace the future. Consider what Alberta's future might hold. Imagine the kind of future we could build for our province. Decide what actions are needed. And harness all our energy and resources to achieve the results we want – a strong and vibrant economy with opportunities for Albertans to succeed.

AEDA looks forward to being involved in this exciting initiative.

In the coming year, AEDA will continue to work with government and the business community to ensure that the goals of business, industry, government and all Albertans are achieved.

Our challenge is to embrace the future and to work together to make that future a reality.

EMBRACE THE FUTURE



Embracing the future will be the focus of a Future Summit for the province. The Alberta Economic Development Authority has been asked by the Alberta government to work with the ministers of Economic Development, Finance, Revenue, and Community Development to plan and facilitate the Future Summit and help chart a course for Alberta's debt-free future.

The Future Summit will give all Albertans a voice in crafting the vision that will carry this province forward into the future and will reflect the values of Alberta: community and family, hard work and caring for others, creativity, confidence and innovation and excellence in all endeavours.

ALBERTA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY MEMBERS

as of April 1, 2001

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Ashar, Mr. Mike
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Newall & Associates

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Province of Alberta

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